

A CHRISTIAN ADDRESS

TO THE

CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS.

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CONFEDERATE ARMY.

SOLDIERS:—

You find yourselves suddenly plunged into all the realities of a hard service, away from home, at the hazard of property, health and life. *Why* are you where you are? Unlike the armies of Europe, the unconsulted, unenlightened subjects of mere power, you do not fight like mercenaries simply because you are bidden. Never was there such an army so entirely one in heart and mind, with the authorities in command, civil and military. Their counsels are your counsels, and their objects are your objects, one undivided. Never were there such immense armies in the field, who so longed for peace and home, and who were so resolved to see neither until the work which they had undertaken should be accomplished.

But this is not enough. You, as well as the authorities in command, are amenable to truth and justice, and to the judgments of an eternal world. Therefore, when any man, be he friend or foe, Statesman or Christian, asks "*What are you fighting for?*" you ought to be prepared to give an irrefutable answer; for if this war be morally wrong on your part, no Christian Address to you could open with anything less than the warning words of the prophet: "Break off from your sins by righteousness and from your iniquities by turning unto God." Throw down your arms and go home—it is better to suffer tyranny and spoliation, *anything*, rather than be in a moral wrong.

What then are the true merits of the case? for in such a fearful question we must go to the bottom of things.

Admitting any amount of sin, which may be charged upon individuals or against party spirit and ambition, such as exists in all governments, and of which the South has had its full share, the following facts are in this country held to be indisputable, while they are admitted by not a few in the very country which is seeking our destruction :

The North has been long engaged in making war upon the South. For more than forty years it was a war upon *character*. In this form it came to be unparalleled in the annals of bitterness and calumny. Though growingly aided of late years by the pulpit, the chief organ in the conduct of this war has been the press—now the great educator of the mind. This press, including all the papers of large circulation, and falling more and more into the “sensation” style, has stirred up popular prejudice and hatred, and greatly increased popular ignorance by seizing upon the fact of there being four millions of African negroes in the South in domestic servitude, though brought here originally under English law, by English non-residents and against the will of the inhabitants, by English and Northern slave traders.

At the adoption of the Constitution, this population was found to be an inseparable element in the Southern States, at once their burden and their trust. Their exclusive control was of right guaranteed to the sovereign States in which they were found by the most stringent obligations of the national faith, and it was upon this ground that these States became a party to the Constitution, in which instrument the slave is accurately described as a person held to service; and the State laws make his service the “chattels”—not his person, which is protected by various enactments; and it is observed of these 4,000,000 thus held to service, that no similar number of people upon record ever rose so rapidly from the savage state to civilization, christianity and general happiness. Their improvement is still in progress by the will of the States, and they will enjoy, as fast as they are prepared for it, all the liberty compatible with the joint interest of the two races.

But this providential, social condition of the South is made use of, not only for the formation of Northern societies hostile to the South, but as a convenient engine for perpetual agitation and excitement by all the arts of falsehood, ridicule and malignant wit, respecting not only slavery, but at length every thing Southern; a state of things in which the South could find no peace or rest from aggression. That she had in Congress and elsewhere some men who were arrogant and of extreme opinions does not alter the leading facts in the case at all. Meanwhile the sensation papers—those great genii of evil—were in rivalry: each striving to outdo the others in the cultivation of a field so productive of fruit for the taste which they had created, until the stream of sectional calumny became a torrent destructive, as all wise men had foreseen it certainly would be, of every bond which could hold such a government together. Commercial interests, too, had unfortunately been long running in the same channels with this supra scriptural and factitious philanthropy upon the slavery question, in the history of which it has been observed of all who have given themselves up to it, yet it has worked in them the notion of a law—not only higher than the laws of their country, but higher than the law of God, and those meetings in which it comes to its last realization with men and women are scenes of shocking and blasphemous infidelity.

These malign influences united, first carried the State elections, and in the Northern legislatures the first bars of the Union gave way. Nine of them passed laws under the title of personal liberty bills, which were not only couched in terms studiously offensive to the South, but which were in direct and palpable violation of the Constitution of the United States. Its plainest provisions could no longer be executed in the Northern States except at the peril of the Southern man's life. In fact, they could not be executed at all. The plea of these laws being for the protection of free negroes, was hypocritical, since it was not pretended that even one such had ever been claimed.

But those in the lead of this invasion of the South could not wait for laws—even their own. In October, 1859, after long and extensive preparations in the North, an expedition was made into Virginia to produce a servile

insurrection and general slaughter. Our citizens were murdered in the night by abolitionists, and nothing but the good providence of God prevented an indiscriminate massacre. A large majority of the Northern people condemned this invasion, or seemed to do so. I say *seemed*, because several of the States refused to give up such of the murderers as escaped, while there was an ominous minority who openly sympathized with the criminals as martyrs and held public meetings in their honor.

The Federal Congress was next overborne and made a party to this war of disunion, now to be carried against Southern property as well as character and peace. Though the South was the largest producer of the largest commercial staple in the world, she was not allowed to enjoy the benefit of it. They were made chiefly to accrue to the North, through the tariff and navigation laws, and other inexorable laws of trade which the North controlled. The subject was one easily obscured by theories, and fairness could at least be pretended. But the next step did not admit even of a pretence. The North seized upon all the territories. It was allowed that they were the common property of the two sections: but the North resorted to the higher law and pleaded conscience for robbery. She could not "extend slavery"—though it was demonstrable that the South would not by taking her portion of the Territories add one to the number of slaves, but on the contrary give the blacks as well as the whites, by spreading out, an opportunity to get a better living. But no—the North said to the South, you shall have none of them, or move into them, though lying next you, unless you leave your property behind you, and move into them as Northern men. Thus the South saw herself stripped of all her property in the territories, and stripped by *law*, for by foreign emigration the North had now the power to make the law.

Finally, a sectional and anti-Southern candidate was nominated for the Presidency, and the principal document issued by the party from Washington to carry his election was an ultra abolition essay by a Senator from Massachusetts, who had been endorsed by the Legislature of that State, and who exhausted all the powers of sectional denunciation and insult, and as if to make the moral disau-

nion complete and irreparable, it was thrust upon the entire South through the mails. *This sectional candidate was elected*—the first in the history of the Republic, and as might have been foreseen of any such election it has proved the last—for what was the result? The South found herself completely at the mercy of the North, with all power in the hands of an irresponsible majority, and that majority her enemies, to control her property and her commerce by a system under which she had long groaned, and the North grown rich and able to oppress that section from which her property chiefly had come. What could the South do under a war of this sort, growing more and more formidable every year. It is said in reply that she still had left for her protection the *Constitution* and the *Supreme Court*. But every knowing and impartial person foresaw that these barriers would as certainly yield as the other powers of the Government had yielded. The party leaders whom the North was following had already in their speeches assailed and repudiated the decisions of the Supreme Court, and the new Executive who had done the same thing in his very first official act, could and would soon mould that court to his mind by the appointment of new judges. And could any man doubt that the Constitution which had been so summarily set aside by a majority of the Northern States in their State capacity, would be as certainly set aside under one pretext or another by these same parties in their national capacity, so soon as they were ready for it? If there be a doubt upon this point, it is dispelled by the prompt, flagrant and admitted trampling under foot of both the Constitution and laws by the excited and maddened Federal Executive and Congress within the past six months.

But it is further alleged that the South should have sought a Constitutional redress of grievances by a call of a general convention of all the States to release her from the Union. But the parties who so allege are the very parties who voted against every measure proposed in the "Peace Conference" for the relief of the South, and will one of them say they believe the North ever would have consented to the calling of such a Convention at all? The whole world knows they would not.

Up to this point no one pretends that the South had

ever infringed the Constitution either in its letter or spirit, by State laws, courts or otherwise. The only case urged, that of imprisoning negro sailors carried into South Carolina contrary to the laws of the State, was overruled by a subsequent decision of the Supreme Court, declaring that such persons were not "citizens," as it also decided that the Missouri restriction upon slavery to which the South had reluctantly submitted was also unconstitutional.

But surely the South should have *waited* until the sectional party now in full power had proceeded to some overt act of invasion—i. e. it should have waited until bound hand and foot, and resistance had become impossible, as it would have been within the first four years, more probably the first four months, of an administration now for the first time inaugurated sectionally against the South.—Moreover, the South by a deeper and juster view, saw not in the late election a mere political defeat, such as all parties have in turn cheerfully submitted to, but the final completion and triumph of a *plan*, which had been assuming a more and more definite shape since 1820, for enabling the North to govern her at will.

To the mass of the Northern people it would be unjust to call this a plan, for they did not intend anything of the sort: but they were led by those who did intend it. They were educated to it, and no comprehensive observer of the growingly sectional workings could doubt what was the general drift of things, or what the issue must certainly be—i. e. just what it has proved to be. A political leader has thoroughly misled the Northern understanding by the false dogma of the "irrepressible conflict," and as thoroughly corrupted its conscience by its twin dogma of the "higher law," and this same leader had been heard to say some years ago, when he saw a train filled with foreign emigrants: "These are the men who will one day be fighting our battles with the South"—a region then innocent of the thought of war.

What then could be done? All remedies affording a shadow of hope had been exhausted. It had come to sectional subjugation or secession. Waiving the dispute about the Constitutional right of sovereign States to secede, in which a majority of you probably do not believe, none dispute the right of States or other communities to reject

any existing government upon sufficient cause, or that there may be such causes, as in our American Revolution. The South judged that she had such cause, and eleven great States, comprising a territory as large as all Europe, Russia excepted,) and one of the richest in the world, united and declared their independence. Three other States are with them in heart, as they would be in fact, but for their dread of the Federal invader.

The South did, indeed, take "the public property" within her bounds; not a tithe of what she was entitled to upon a fair division, but for which she offered to pledge herself upon a final settlement. She asked no more, and wished to go in peace, and did everything in her power compatible with her independence to prevent war. Fort Sumter was not touched until a hostile fleet was known to be on its way from New York. Virginia, with a Union majority of three to one, did not secede until her commissioners to Washington had been refused even a hearing, and she saw by the Federal call for a large army that the alternative was submission to the policy of the Republican administration, whatever it might be, or invasion by force of arms. The alternative before the whole South was an independent government or subjugation. She could not hesitate. She chose—you chose the former at whatever hazards of conflict with such an enemy, and it is perhaps plain enough now that she did not strike for liberty a day too soon.

The difficulties were past all reconciliation. The North had already carried on the war too long. The disunion, in feeling she had made an impassable gulph.

The North has now come seeking the blood of our citizens, and upon what plea?—the public property? She has nearly the whole of it already. Is it the restoration of the Union? She knows that this is simply impossible, except by establishing a military despotism over these States, and "holding them as territories under governors appointed from Illinois and Massachusetts," as suggested by a leading Republican Senator; and it is this or some equivalent which the North is now fighting for, since no hope for a re-establishment of the Union is now even professed. To carry out this design, a war is now being waged upon us in a style better befitting savages than civ-

alized men. There is, perhaps, no example upon record of one people so exceedingly mad against another; and hence the savage cruelties which have characterized this invasion. Our very bed chambers are infested with murderers and thieves. Our citizens found in the North are hunted down and imprisoned and their property confiscated; while in the Border and Northern States scores of citizens, upon no other ground than that of a suspected sympathy with our sufferings and wrongs, are seized in the night, denied a trial, and hurried away to be indefinitely immured in the prison of Fort Lafayette. Surely this Republican Bastille might stir the ashes of the noble friend of liberty whose name it so inappropriately bears.

But let us beware of injustice in ourselves, the very thing all complain of in others, and of that liability which we are all under to cover up our own faults while we exaggerate those of our enemies, and so pass an unrighteous judgment, which good men should fear more than the loss of a battle. We cannot doubt that there are those at the North who have no unholy motive in supporting this war, but have been persuaded that it is right to force the Confederate States into subjection to the United States, "at whatever cost," (to use their own expression,) of blood and slaughter. They sincerely believe the South to be in the wrong. Their error is in the attempt to right themselves upon such a scale of destruction. But with a larger number the motive is ambition and revenge. With the great mass the motive is simply that of pecuniary profit from holding the South. Viewed in this aspect, the difference between us is this: We are fighting for our own property, they for their neighbors'. Their position is that of one holding a pistol to the breast of the South and saying, "your money or your life." Their lowest terms of peace, (so far as we can gain any knowledge of them,) are an acknowledgement of their right to rule us, and obey such laws as they may make; the half of our substance to pay the costs of their invasion, and extermination, by fire and sword, if we do not submit.

Now while we hold all wars of aggression and invasion to be contrary to the will of God, as they are plainly contrary to his word, those strictly in self-defense are not. If individual self-defense be lawful, national self-defense

stands on precisely the same ground ; and if this be not lawful there can be no end to tyranny or conquest. We stand or fall, then, in this war of self-defense, according to the righteousness and sufficiency of our reasons. These reasons are before you. They are your own reasons and they are mine, and we not only spread them out before the world for a righteous verdict—we spread them out before God, and appeal to HIM as the God of Justice for the justice of our cause, acting under the only guide to conscience and duty known to us. Under these solemn convictions we implore his assistance—

1st. As the God of peace, that if war be forced upon us, he would save us from the war *spirit*, which is contrary to his will, no matter how just our cause, and enable us to love our persecutors according to the sense of his own injunction. To love our persecutors is a plain Christian duty, and by God's grace it is practicable. But for any to love those whom they are persecuting is impossible.

2d. As the God of wisdom and of right, that he will save us from all counsels which he will not himself approve and bless, and if battle be forced upon us then

3rd. We implore him as the God of battles that He will not suffer us to fall into the hands of such enemies—enemies vindictively resolved to drive the plow-share of war not only through the Southern soil, but through the Southern heart.

Here then is your answer to the question : "What are you fighting for?" It is the answer which we give to other nations, whether they now understand our position or not. And what is of infinitely more importance, it is that which we humbly regard as our justification before God, and his own authorization of this defense. If we are in error, may He graciously show it to us, and give us the humility to act accordingly.

I have placed this political statement first in this Christian address for two reasons : first, because the facts which it recites lay at the very foundation of things, and so govern the question of right and wrong, and so govern the question of *duty* in this most responsible act of your lives. I wish—presently and mainly to talk about religion ; but it is vain to talk about religion while voluntarily engaged in that which is contrary to the will of God. I also place

this statement first, because at the beginning I had doubts about the Christian lawfulness of resistance by force of arms.

An elaborate review of the facts taken in their historic order and connection, *weakened* those doubts. The refusal of all redress or compromise, and the Federal inauguration of actual war and invasion, removed them; and the mode of conducting that war and the savage sentiments of the North toward our whole population, *scattered them to the winds*.

Cleared thus in the court of conscience as to the special work in which you are engaged, I come to the directly religious objects of this address. We, of the great mass of the people at home, feel that for our sakes, as well as your own, you are exposed to all these hardships and perils. War is placed by the Almighty himself in the fore front of the great judgements which he visits upon the world for sin, named, as it is, by Him before pestilence and famine. Upon you it falls most heavily, though personally you may be as good, or better, than others; and a profound sympathy is felt for you, not only by relatives and friends, but by thousands whose faces you have never seen or will see. It is felt for your bodily health and comfort, as witnessed by innumerable hands at work for you by day and by night, and which will be so long as you continue to need them. It is felt for your spiritual and eternal welfare, as witnessed by the ardent prayers unceasingly offered to God in your behalf. Our desire for you, surpassing all other desires, is that you may be true Christians—have the victory over sin, and thus be assured of eternal peace.

Some of you have been professors of religion at home; here are now witnessing a good confession in the camp and in the field. To you the interests of religion are now specially committed—interests of greater moment than the issue of battles or the fate of nations. May you, indeed, prove standard bearers for Him whose kingdom shall endure when heaven and earth have passed away!

But some of you in whom (before you entered the army) religion was but a feeble principle at least, are in danger of falling to rise no more. You needed then all the influences of the Sabbath and of the Church and of Christian

society to keep you from falling away. What will become of you now? There is but one course. Throw yourselves upon those special promises which are made for special temptations. The general influences of war being, by common consent, unfriendly to the Christian life, you must be forewarned and forearmed against that which is sure to come. Sometimes the batteries of Satan must be faced and stormed and silenced. In other, and probably more frequent cases, retreat is not only the path of safety, but of wisdom, as in war you must retire from a position which you cannot defend. When a weak Christian encounters strong temptation, discretion is the better part of valor. If you can escape temptation, and do not, you may expect to fall; but if you cannot escape and look to God for help, you have his promise for the victory. Fear of the world is probably nowhere so strong as in the army and many who have been truly converted are more liable there than any where else to be ashamed of their religion—ashamed of Christ! Think of it, and never cease to think of it, until you can say, with conscious sincerity—

“No, when I blush be this my shame,
That I no more revere his name.”

Do not neglect the *means* of success which are indispensable, even for those much stronger than you. Can a victory be won without a fight? When Col. Gardner, that lion in combat, had to march at six, he rose at four for reading the Bible and prayer. Watch and pray, and your pastors and brethren will watch and pray for you at home.

But the great mass in the army as elsewhere do not profess any religion at all, or believe themselves ever to have been born again, without which Christ says no man shall enter the kingdom of heaven. To those of you in this condition there are several things which it is both your interest and your duty to consider:—

1st. The first thing as people generally imagine should be the fear of death: but experience proves that soldiers think as little of death as others, and find the fear of it as little productive of true religion. In fact this fear is not put forth in the Bible with any special prominence as a motive to make men Christians. Still common sense

should teach every soldier that his life is by no means as secure as it would be at home. There are not only the liabilities of battle, but sickness which makes death an invariable attendant upon camps. If all men may then be appealed to be always ready to die on account of the uncertainty of life, how much more the soldier. But there is a greater matter than this to be considered.

2d. *The exposure of the soul.* If you have been any time in camp, and ever knew anything before about the circumstances and means under which men generally become Christians, you have only to compare your present situation with what it once was, to see that the danger of your never being converted and saved is very much increased by your being in the army. Not to call your attention solemnly to this fact would be both unfaithful and unkind. But remember also

3rd. *That religion may be sought and found in the army.* Examples are not wanting in your own camps of those who went into the ranks unconverted sinners, who are now true Christians, prepared equally to live or die. God also has promised that when in the discharge of one duty, special hindrances are encountered, in the discharge of another and greater duty to himself he will give grace in proportion. Do not then be discouraged in the least, or think you must put off religion until you get out of the army, for you may pass directly from the army to your last account, or what is more probable and more to be dreaded, you may leave the army in such a state of hardness and indifference as will render your conversion more improbable in peace than it is now in war.

4th. Remember the promise: *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* Christ is the Saviour of sinners, and will hear the cry of those who call upon him, no matter when or where, if they repent of their sins, and believe on him as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, and who came to seek and to save those who were lost.

5th. Remember to use the *means* of conversion. Attend upon the public services of religion held among you. Read the bible and pray in private, and let your secret thoughts be rising to God through the day, or when pacing your rounds in the silent night. Remember also the

praying tent, of which I believe there is one or more in every camp, where if you desire it you may have the opportunity to worship God and seek his blessings in concert—his blessing upon yourselves and his blessing upon your cause. Those who are ashamed of Christ he himself will be ashamed of and cast off among his enemies at the judgment day.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. And here I would respectfully, yet most firmly, urge upon the officers the duty of obedience to the command of the Almighty; and that on this day there be no drills or inspections or parades, and, except in cases of palpable necessity, no marches. A leading organ of the enemy proclaimed at the opening of their war that there would be no more Sunday until they had finished it; and they chose that day on which to fight at Manassas Junction; and it is said that there is no record of a battle in modern times begun on that day which did not end disastrously to the party which began it.

Need I speak of the effects of the use of intoxicating liquors, not only morally, but as in all cases with those who are well, tending to produce disease, and not health, and destructive of the very purpose for which an army was raised at all? Or need I speak of *profane swearing*, which is forbidden by the Almighty in words as distinct and authoritative as those which spoke the world into being? Gen. Washington, that noblest of soldiers, prohibited this vice in his army under penalties, and this on the ground of the provocation offered to the Most High, the need of whose assistance he so deeply felt and so promptly acknowledged. The drunken and the profane are a disgrace to any cause.

The soldier who has no regard for the divine will, must endure the hardships and perils of war from some inferior motive, but he whose first concern is to approve himself to God may be depended upon for all lesser duties. He will endure not only the march and the fight, but he will, for the sake of his cause, submit to a strict discipline; and not only submit to it himself, but by his example and his words and whole influence seek to promote it in others; and what is much more difficult for a gentleman, rather than injure the service, he will submit

to the injustice of all manners of unworthy officers, though they be his inferiors in every thing but rank. He has embarked in a cause for the sake of which he will endure any thing. He is fighting to deliver from oppression millions who cannot fight for themselves. His is one of the grandest struggles in history, in which nothing can give such subjection to discipline, such power of endurance and such invincible courage in the field, as true religion and that confidence in the presence and power of the Almighty which it always imparts. It was this which made the first armies of Cromwell the terror of all Europe. The soldier who is faithful in the ranks deserves the highest consideration in this world, and though he should fail to receive it here, God's approval is his highest reward, and he can afford to wait for it until he hears the Great Commander's voice which calls to his presence and glory in the highest heavens.

Soldiers and brethren—my heart's desire and prayer to God for you is that you may be saved—saved from battle, from defeat, from sickness and from death—saved from sin and saved from hell; and this is the common burden of ten thousand hearts in your behalf, and—

* * * "If ever fondest prayer
For others' weal availed on high,
Mine shall not be wholly lost in air
But wait you names beyond the sky."

